

## Chapter VI: Consultation and Coordination

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### Introduction

Environmental laws and regulations pertaining to the protection of resources did not exist when the South Fork Bridge was constructed in 1931. An overview of the environmental compliance documents, completed pursuant to National Environmental Protection Act, and which relate to the South Fork Bridge, is presented below in chronological order:

- The *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan* (Merced River Plan) applies seven management elements to prescribe desired future conditions, typical visitor activities and experiences, and park facilities and management activities allowed in the river corridor. The Merced River Plan applies to any project that is within the Wild and Scenic River boundary, which includes the South Fork, or would affect the Outstandingly Remarkable Values or free-flowing condition of the river. Although the Merced River Plan did not specifically call for the removal of the South Fork Bridge, the zoning designations in the plan allow for such an action.
- The original *Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact*, South Fork Merced River Bridge Replacement Project, *Yosemite National Park* (1996) was completed prior to passage of the Merced River Plan, and did not consider impacts to the Outstandingly Remarkable Values or the free-flowing condition of the Merced Wild and Scenic River. The Finding of No Significant Impact indicated a temporary bypass bridge would be constructed while the approach to the South Fork Bridge was to be widened, the bridge itself was to be demolished, and a new bridge was to be constructed. Construction was expected to last 13 months with mitigation measures designed to reduce impacts to the lowest possible level. However, several investigations indicated the South Fork Bridge was failing, and in 1997, a major flood on the South Fork Merced River forced the bridge to be condemned and closed. This emergency situation expedited the construction of the temporary bypass bridge, and since 1998, a temporary Bailey bridge has carried traffic on Wawona Road across the South Fork Merced River. In 1999, a lawsuit on the proposed *El Portal Road Improvements Project* resulted in halting plans to remove and replace the South Fork Bridge until completion of an approved, comprehensive management plan for the Merced Wild and Scenic River. A Record of Decision for the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan* was signed in August 2000 and revised November 2000.

### Scoping History

On September 20, 2002, the Yosemite National Park Superintendent mailed a letter announcing the resumption of the planning process for the removal and replacement of the South Fork Bridge. This letter was sent to individuals and organizations on the Yosemite National Park mailing list, and background, timeline, and public involvement information was published on the park Web site. The letter also detailed the time, location, and purpose of a public meeting for the project.

The purpose of the renewed planning process is to identify alternatives for the South Fork Merced River Bridge Replacement Project that are consistent with the Merced River Plan. During the planning process, alternatives have been developed that address bridge removal and

compliance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, as amended (16 USC 1274[d]). Through scoping and the public comment review process on the South Fork Merced River Bridge Replacement Project, the planning process is being conducted in consultation with affected federal agencies, state and local governments, tribal groups, and interested organizations and individuals.

## ***Public Involvement***

Press releases describing the project and soliciting public comment were issued in September 2002. On October 23, 2002, the National Park Service held a public meeting at the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center, East Auditorium, to discuss several planning projects, including the South Fork Merced River Bridge Replacement Project, with interested citizens. The purpose of the meeting was to: (1) provide participants with an overview of existing conditions and the Preferred Alternative, (2) ask participants to identify key issues that should be analyzed during the environmental review and compliance process, and (3) provide an opportunity for participants to ask questions regarding project alternatives and the overall environmental review and compliance process. Comments were received until October 26, 2002. Since that time, the project has been included in the monthly open houses held at the park on February 26, 2003 and March 28, 2003 (Yosemite Valley Visitor Center, East Auditorium) to discuss all upcoming park projects and has been included in the quarterly *Planning Update* newsletters for Yosemite National Park issued in September 2002 and January 2003.

## ***Results of Scoping***

As a result of the scoping effort to date, 10 responses were received. All comments received in response to the scoping notices have been duly considered and will remain in the project record throughout this planning process. A summary and full report on the analysis of the public scoping comments are available to the public and can be obtained through the park (USFS-CAT 2002).

## ***Public Comment Period***

Media announcements initiate the beginning of a formal public comment period on the *South Fork Bridge Removal and Replacement Environmental Assessment*. All interested agencies, groups, and individuals are invited to review the document and submit comments during the 30-day public comment period. Two National Park Service open houses will take place during the comment period for this document. Project managers and representatives will be on hand to answer questions and accept written comments. Open houses are scheduled for April 23, 2003 and May 21, 2003 from 2:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. and will take place at the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center East Auditorium.

## ***Coordination***

### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued a permit to the National Park Service in 1996 granting the use of a Nationwide Permit for the South Fork Merced River Bridge Replacement Project (USACE 1996). This permit has expired and the National Park Service is coordinating with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ensure that a current permit is in place before project implementation.

## Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

The National Park Service is currently coordinating with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board to obtain required Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification. The National Park Service may be required to submit a report of waste discharge, obtain waste discharge requirements, or an individual waiver.

## Federal Highway Administration

The Federal Highway Administration examined the South Fork Bridge on three occasions: once in 1992, once in 1993, and once in 1997, after the January 1997 flood. In 1992, the Federal Highway Administration structural inspection of the South Fork Bridge identified deflection in the steel girders, requiring the park to impose weight restrictions on the bridge. As a result, the bridge was determined to be critically deficient, but was allowed to remain in service with an estimated remaining life of 10 years. A scour hole was discovered under one of the bridge piers in 1993, and a related hydraulic field review resulted in a recommendation to completely reconstruct the South Fork Bridge. The January 1997 flood resulted in additional scouring around piers and abutments, and the Federal Highway Administration condemned and closed the South Fork Bridge in 1998, after the installation of a temporary bypass bridge. The Federal Highway Administration determinations on the South Fork Bridge are on file at Yosemite National Park.

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 USC 1531 *et seq.*), requires all federal agencies to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out by the agency does not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or critical habitat. On September 26, 2002, the National Park Service requested a list of federally listed and other sensitive species that may be affected by the project. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service responded in writing on October 2, 2002, and fulfilling the requirements to provide species lists under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act. The National Park Service will continue to coordinate with the agency on the *South Fork Bridge Removal and Replacement Environmental Assessment*.

## California State Historic Preservation Office

The South Fork Merced River Bridge and surrounding resources have been the subject of previous evaluation and mitigation actions. The bridge is located within the boundaries of both the Wawona Cultural Landscape and the Wawona Archeological District. However, the bridge is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places due to damage and reconstructions since its original construction in 1931 that have compromised its architectural and historic integrity. In 1991, the bridge was documented to HAER standards, which included historical and descriptive data, measured drawings, and archival photographs. In accordance with the protocols agreed upon by Yosemite National Park and the California State Historic Preservation Office on March 20, 1997, the current level of documentation for the South Fork Merced River Bridge was determined sufficient.

One archeological site, CA- MRP- 171, lies within the proposed project area. Beginning in 1994, the National Park Service initiated formal consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Office regarding this site, in preparation for the proposed removal of the South Fork Bridge. Consequently, the site has been formally determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing element of the Wawona Archeological District. Based on the

results of test excavations and construction monitoring in 1984, and the subsequent development of an appropriate research approach and scope of work, the California State Historic Preservation Office in 1994 concurred with a data recovery plan to mitigate the adverse effects to the archeological site by the proposed bridge replacement project. Execution of the data recovery plan would result in a determination of *no adverse effect* for the site.

Removal of the South Fork Bridge would comply with the requirements in Appendix H (Historic Preservation Memorandum of Understanding) of the Merced River Plan. This Programmatic Agreement is between the National Park Service at Yosemite, the California State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regarding planning, design, construction, operations, and maintenance activities at Yosemite National Park. One stipulation of removal of the South Fork Bridge remains—obtaining California State Historic Preservation Office consent to the removal of the bridge. This stipulation to coordinate Section 106 (Section 36 CFR Part 800) consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation is required under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The National Park Service will request consensus from the agencies upon completion of the environmental assessment.

In a 1994 letter, the California State Historic Preservation Office responded to a request from Yosemite National Park for review of the proposed project in compliance with the 1979 Memorandum of Agreement between the two entities. The letter references a report submitted by the National Park Service, which describes the above-mentioned site as being within the area of potential effect for the South Fork Merced River Bridge Replacement Project. That report apparently describes test excavations and construction monitoring undertaken in 1984 at the site, which identified the presence of two American Indian components and a historic refuse dump. Based on these results, the California State Historic Preservation Office concurred with the research approach and scope of work necessary to perform data recovery at this National Register of Historic Places-eligible site, under the 1979 Memorandum of Agreement (COHP 1994).

Archeological monitoring at the site was undertaken in April 1998, during the installation of the temporary Bailey bridge. In the upper soil stratum, cultural remains were observed that consisted of two obsidian flakes and various historic debris: nondiagnostic bottle glass fragments (amber, clear, and green), cut cow bone fragments, a bullet shell, and unidentified metal fragments. For the north bridge approach, the National Park Service observed obsidian flakes in the upper 10 to 15 cm (4–6 inches) of soil. Also recorded was a historic road culvert and a 1931 brass cap benchmark that were unearthed (the latter collected). No intact prehistoric deposits were encountered during the monitoring (Montague 1998).

A report entitled the *Archeological Survey of Wawona Road, Yosemite National Park, California*, was submitted by Yosemite National Park to the California State Historic Preservation Office for review on January 17, 1996 (NPS 1996c). The report presents cultural resource documentation and limited preliminary evaluation in support of a project to rehabilitate Wawona Road, designated Yosemite Package #565. The letter specifically requests concurrence for the current project (replacement of the South Fork Bridge), which is one proposed project within the package. The letter also mentions that the California State Historic Preservation Office has previously been consulted regarding this project (NPS 1996b).

In a final consultation letter for the proposed project, the California State Historic Preservation Office states their understanding that archeological sites in the undertaking's area of potential effect "were subject to data recovery excavations pursuant to the terms of the National Park Service 1979 Memorandum of Agreement" (COHP 1996). This letter was written in response to the receipt of the 1996 environmental assessment for the proposed project from the Federal Highway Administration. The letter further notes that the environmental assessment suggests that data recovery would be implemented prior to project construction and inquires whether the data

recovery has been conducted and reported (COHP 1996). The data recovery report (NPS 2000c) states that it “constitutes sufficient mitigation and a finding of *no adverse effect* for the proposed undertaking.” This is because the data recovery was undertaken within the constructs of the 1979 Memorandum of Agreement. The data recovery document reiterates that an Inadvertent Discovery Plan and archeological monitoring is recommended for the remaining bridge demolition and construction work.

American Indian consultation was conducted to determine if culturally associated American Indian communities had any religious or other significant cultural concerns associated with the project area. Associated American Indian organizations interested in the process include the American Indian Council of Mariposa County, Inc., the North Fork Mono Indian Museum, and the Chukchansi Tribal Government. As a result of these discussions, two American Indian monitors representing the Chukchansi tribal council and the American Indian Council of Mariposa County, Inc., observed the previously discussed excavations and assisted with fieldwork (NPS 2000c).

### **Native American Consultation**

American Indian consultation was conducted to determine if culturally associated American Indian communities had any religious or other significant cultural concerns associated with the project area. Associated Native American organizations interested in the process include the American Indian Council of Mariposa County, Inc., the North Fork Mono Indian Museum, and the Chukchansi Tribal Government. As a result of these discussions, two American Indian monitors representing the Chukchansi Tribal Council of Mariposa County, Inc. observed the previously discussed excavations and assisted with fieldwork (NPS 2000c).

### ***Future Information***

Updated information about various aspects of the South Fork Merced River Bridge Replacement Project will be periodically distributed via newsletters, mailings, the Yosemite National Park web site ([www.nps.gov/yose/planning](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning)), and regional and local news media. Discussion of the project is included in monthly open house meetings held at the park as well as the quarterly *Planning Update* newsletters available through the park or on the park web site. Interested individuals, organizations, and agencies may also respond to:

Superintendent, Yosemite National Park  
ATTN: South Fork Merced River Bridge Replacement Project  
PO Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389

**or email comments to:**

[YOSE\\_planning@nps.gov](mailto:YOSE_planning@nps.gov)

Yosemite National Park planning email address. Use for requesting information, planning documents, or submitting comments on projects; provide name of project in subject line.

**or FAX comments to:**

209/379- 1294

Yosemite Planning FAX number; use for requesting information, planning documents, or submitting comments on projects.

**or leave a voice mail at:**

209/379- 1365

Yosemite Planning voicemail box; use only for requests to be added to mailing list for the *Yosemite Planning Update* or for copies of planning documents; no comments on projects are accepted.

## ***List of Agencies, Organizations, and Businesses that Received the South Fork Merced River Bridge Replacement Environmental Assessment***

Acton – Agua Dulce Trails Council	California Bicycle Coalition
ADA Compliance Service	California Preservation Foundation
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	California State Automobile Association
AIA California Council	California State Library
Alameda County Public Library	California Wilderness Coalition
All Seasons Groveland Inn	Californians for Western Wilderness
American Alpine Club	Canyonlands National Park
American Hiking Society	Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center
American Indian Council of Mariposa, Inc.	California Native Plant Society Sequoia Chapter
American River Club	Coconino National Forest
American Whitewater	Coldwell Banker – Dan Blough & Associates
Ansel Adams Gallery	Columbia College Library
Antelope Valley Press	Comfort Inn
Associated Press	Congressman George Miller
Automobile Club of Southern California	Conservation Study Institute
Backcountry Horsemen of California	Contra Costa Times
Bakersfield Californian	Council of Fresno County Governments
Bassett Memorial Library	California State University Fresno, Henry
Biophilia Society	Madden Library
Bishop Chamber of Commerce	California State University Sacramento
Bureau of Land Management	California State University Stanislaus
Bureau of Reclamation	Cycle California! Magazine
California Department of Boating and Waterways	David Evans & Associates, Inc.
California Department of Fish and Game	Delaware North Corporation
California Department of Parks and Recreation	Department of Defense U.S. Army Corps of
California Department of Justice,	Engineers
Attorney General	Earth First! –Santa Cruz
California Department of Transportation	Earth Island Institute
(Caltrans)	Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund
Caltrans, Transportation Planning Branch	East Bay Bicycle Coalition
Caltrans Central Regional Environmental	Eastern Madera County Chamber of Commerce
Analysis Office	ECO News
Caltrans District 9	Economic Development Council
Caltrans District 6	El Portal Chevron
Caltrans Division of Transportation Planning,	El Portal Homeowners Association
MS32	El Portal Market
Caltrans Environmental Planning	El Portal Town Planning Advisory Committee
Caltrans New Technology and Research	Environment & Natural Resources
Caltrans Planning	Environment Now
California Native American Heritage	Environmental Defense Fund
Commission	Environmental Science Associates
California Office of Historic Preservation	Federal Emergency Management Association
California Office of Planning and Research	Fish Camp Advisory Council
California Regional Water Quality Control Board	Fish Camp Property Owners Association
California State Clearinghouse	Foothill Resources
California State Department of Justice	Foresta Preservation Association
California State Mining and Mineral Museum	Fresno Chamber of Commerce
California State Resources Agency	Fresno County Board of Supervisors
California State Senate	Fresno County Planning and Resource
California Trade and Commerce Agency	Management
California Trout Inc, Sierra Nevada Office	Fresno County City Planning Department

Fresno Flats Historical Library, SHSA	Mariposa Superintendent of Public Schools
Fresno Visitors Bureau	Mariposa Tribune
Friends of the Earth	Merced Conference and Visitor Center
Friends of the River	Merced County Association of Governments
Friends of the River/American Rivers	Merced County Planning Commission
Friends of Yosemite Valley	Merced County Planning Department
George Radanovich, Representative	Merced Irrigation District
Groveland Branch Library	Merced Sun Star
Groveland Community Services District	MERG
Groveland Ranger District	MIG- Berkeley
Groveland Rotary	Minarets Ranger District
HA Lewis, Inc	Modesto County City Planning Department
Heritage Trails	Modesto County Planning Department
Highway 120 Association	Mono County Board of Supervisors
Highways Magazine	Mono County Bridgeport Paiute Indian Colony
Host Communications	Mono County Community Development
Humboldt- Toiyabe National Forest	Department
Inyo County Planning Department	Mono County Mono Lake Indian Community
Inyo National Forest	Mono County Planning Department
John T. Doolittle, Representative	Monograph Acquisition Services
KCBS- AM Radio	Mountain Light Photography
KCRA TV	National Tour Association
KFBK Radio	National Trust for Historic Preservation
KFIV Radio	Native Habitats
KGO Radio	Natural Resources Council
KMJ Radio	Natural Resources Defense Council
KMPH Radio	NBC News
KOVR TV	NBC TV
KQED Radio	Newsweek
KTVU	North Fork Rancheria
KUHL/KZSQ Radio	Northcoast Environmental Center
KVML, KZSQ, & KKBN	National Parks and Conservation Association,
KXTV	National Office
Los Angeles City Public Library	National Park Service (NPS)
Los Angeles Times	NPS – Air Resources Division
Madera County	NPS – Columbia Cascades Seattle Office
Madera County Board of Supervisors	NPS – Denver Service Center
Madera County Chuckchansi Tribal Government	NPS – Pacific West Region
Madera County North Fork Mono Indian	NPS – Pacific Great Basin Support Office
Museum	NPS – Water Resources Division
Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce	NPS – Office of Legislative and Congressional
Marin County Public Library	Affairs
Mariposa County	Oakhurst Public Library
Mariposa County Air Pollution Control District	Oakland Tribune
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors	Office of Assemblyman Dave Cogdill
Mariposa County Chamber of Commerce	Official Trip Reports
Mariposa County Department of Public Works	SBC Pacific Bell
Mariposa County High School	Pacific Gas and Electric Public Affairs
Mariposa County Planning Department	Pacific Legal Foundation
Mariposa County Public Library	Planning and Conservation League
Mariposa County Unified School District	Pacific Southwest Region Forest and Range
Mariposa County Visitors Bureau	Experimental Station
Mariposa Gazette	Ramada Limited Oakhurst
Mariposa Horse Association	Royston, Hanamoto Alley & Abey
Mariposa Public Utility District	Robert Crown Law Library

Royal Robbins, Inc.	Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors
Sacramento County Public Library	Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce
Salazar Library, Sonoma State University	Tuolumne County Community Development
San Bernardino County Public Library	Tuolumne County Department of Public Works
San Francisco Chronicle	Tuolumne County Planning Commission
San Francisco City Public Library	Tuolumne County Tuolumne Me- wuk Tribal Council
San Francisco Examiner	Tuolumne County Visitor Bureau
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Hetch Hetchy Water & Power	University of California Berkeley Bancroft Library
San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District	University of California Davis Shields Library
San Jose City Public Library	University of California Water Resources Center Archives
San Jose Mercury News	University of California Los Angeles Maps and Government Information Library
Santa Cruz County Library	University of California Los Angeles Young Research Library
Save- the- Redwoods League	United States Attorney's Office
Saving Yosemite	University of California Library Tech Services
Scotty's B&B/Cabin Rentals	University of Minnesota Forestry Library
Service Employees International Union Local 535	URS
Sequoia Alliance	U.S. Congress
Sierra Club	U.S. Department of Justice
Sierra Club Condor Group	U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX
Sierra Club Merced Group	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Sierra Club National Office	U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
Sierra Club Range of Light, Toiyabe Chapter	U.S. Post Office
Sierra Club Tuolumne Group	USA Media
Sierra Club Yosemite Committee	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service
Sierra Communications	U.S. Department of the Interior Library
Sierra National Forest	USGS Publications Department
Sierra Railroad Company	USGS Water Resources Division, Western Region
Sierra Star	Via Adventures
Sierra Telephone	Wawona Area Property Owners Association
Sonoma County Library	Wawona Town Plan Advisory Committee
Sonora Union Democrat	Wild Earth Advocates
Soroptomist International of Groveland	Wild Wilderness
Saint Patrick- Saint Vincent High School	Wilderness Society
Stanford University Green Library	Wilderness Watch
Stanislaus County Environmental Review Committee	Wildlands Center for Preventing Roads
Stanislaus Council of Government	Yosemite Association Board of Trustees
Stanislaus County Library	Yosemite Area Audubon
Stanislaus National Forest	Yosemite Association
State Water Resources Control Board	Yosemite Bug Hostel
Stockton Record	Yosemite Campers Association
Teamsters 386	Yosemite Campers Coalition
The Access Fund	Yosemite Concession Services
The Fresno Bee	Yosemite Fund
The Modesto Bee	Yosemite Guides
The Mountain Democrat Newspaper	Yosemite Institute
The Redwoods in Yosemite	
The Sacramento Bee	
The Trust for Public Land	
Theroux Environmental	
Tioga Lodge	
The Nature Conservancy Weed Program	
Tuolumne County	



Yosemite Mobilization Committee  
Yosemite Motels  
Yosemite Mountaineering School  
Yosemite Partners GMP  
Yosemite Pines  
Yosemite Research Center  
Yosemite Research Library  
Yosemite Restoration Trust

Yosemite Sierra Visitors Bureau  
Yosemite Sightseeing Tours  
Yosemite Valley Railroad Company  
Yosemite Valley School  
Yosemite West Group  
Yosemite West Home Owners  
Yosemite West Real Estate